

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 02574 131152Z

51

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 SAM-01 AID-05 OMB-01 IO-10

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07 CIEP-01 COME-00

CU-02 EUR-12 NIC-01 /095 W

----- 011967

R 131042Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 763

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 2574

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, TH, CH, TW

SUBJECT: CHANGES IN THE CHINESE COMMUNITY SINCE OCTOBER 1973

REF: BANGKOK A-47

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE EMBASSY RECENTLY COMPLETED A STUDY DESIGNED TO UPDATE OUR THINKING ON THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN THAILAND. THE REFERENCED AIRGRAM CONTAINS THE FULL TEXT OF THE STUDY. WE ARE FORWARDING HERewith THE MAIN POINTS OF THE AIRGRAM'S SUMMARY. END SUMMARY.

1. IN THE LAST FIFTEEN MONTHS IMPORTANT CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITHIN THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN THAILAND. POLITICALLY THE SINO-THAI ARE MORE OVERTLY ACTIVE; ECONOMICALLY THEY ARE NERVOUS AND FEEL PRESSURED; AND CULTURALLY THEY ARE MORE OPENLY CHAUVINISTIC. THESE DEVELOPMENTS ARE GREAT ENOUGH TO MAKE A PERCEPTIBLE IMPACT ON THE THAI BODY POLITIC.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 02574 131152Z

2. POLITICALLY, THE CHINESE IN THAILAND HAVE FURTHER ENHANCED THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR TRADITIONAL ROLE OF BACKSTAGE MONEYMAN AND KINGMAKER. MORE SIGNIFICANT FOR THE LONG TERM IS THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW CLASS OF CHINESE POLITICIANS WHO PARTICIPATED AS CANDIDATES IN RECENT ELECTIONS. CHINESE LOBBIED OPENLY FOR PARTY POLICIES PROMISING TO SECURE BENEFITS FOR THE CHINESE MINORITY. BOTH THE SCOPE OF CHINESE PARTICIPATION IN THE CAMPAIGNS, AND THE OCCASIONAL NEAR FLAUNTING OF THEIR ETHNICITY SEEM UNPRECEDENTED IN THAI POLITICAL HISTORY.

3. THE DIFFUSION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITARIAN POWER FOLLOWING THE OCTOBER 1973 DEPARTURE OF THE MILITARY LEADERS, AND THE CONCOMITANT DISARRAY OF MOST OF THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL GROUPINGS, INCLUDING THE ABSENCE OF A "GOVERNMENT PARTY", MADE MONEY ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CATALYSTS IN MANY INDIVIDUAL CAMPAIGNS. AS A RESULT, OPENLY SINITIC AND SINO-THAI CANDIDATES DID WELL INDEED IN THE JANUARY 26 ELECTIONS.

4. ECONOMICALLY, SOME OF THE WEALTHIER ELEMENTS OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY ARE DISTINCTLY NERVOUS. FACTIONS WHO RECEIVED THEIR PROTECTION FROM THE THANOM GOVERNING GROUP HAVE FELT A SEVERE PINCH. MOREOVER, THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY THAT CHARACTERIZED MOST OF 1974 INDUCED SOME OF THE MORE JITTERY CAPITAL TO FLEE.

5. THE RELATIVE CONFUSION PREVAILING WITHIN THE CHINESE COMMERCIAL AND BANKING COMMUNITIES, AND BETWEEN THESE GROUPS AND THEIR THAI POLITICAL PATRONS, ALLOWED THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW AND MORE VIGOROUS GENERATION OF CHINESE COMMERCIAL "WARLORDS". THESE NEW FORCES HAVE NOT COALESCED INTO THE INEVITABLE CLIQUES, AND UNTIL THEY DO SO THE UPPER REACHES OF THE CHINESE ECONOMIC ELITE WILL REMAIN UNCERTAIN AND UNSTABLE. DESPITE THIS INCLEMENT - HIGH ALTITUDE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEATHER, THE SMALL CHINESE SHOPKEEPER HAS MANAGED TO KEEP WELL AHEAD OF THE INFLATION AND OTHER ECONOMIC PRESSURES.

6. THE MINI-RENAISSANCE OF CHINESE CULTURE AMONG THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 02574 131152Z

CHINESE IN THAILAND IS PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE TO HAVE OCCURRED. IT HAS TAKEN THE FORM OF A MORE INTENSE CONCERN FOR TRADITIONAL CHINESE CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND GREATER ATTENTION TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA. THE INTEREST IN THE PRC STEMS FROM PRIDE IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE MOTHER COUNTRY RATHER THAN AFFINITY FOR ITS IDEOLOGY OR LIFE STYLE. THE INTEREST IN BOTH THE PRC AND THE MORE TRADITIONAL "CONFUCIAN" CHINESE CULTURE

RELATES DIRECTLY TO THE WEAKENED CONDITION OF THE RTG WHICH USED TO SUPPRESS SINITIC CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PROMOTE THE ASSIMILATION OF CHINESE INTO THAI CULTURE. IN THE ABSENCE OF VIGOROUS THAI ENFORCEMENT OF THIS OLD POLICY, CHINESE CULTURE HAS REASSERTED ITS BASIC STRENGTH.

7. AN ERA OF RELATIVE TRANQUILITY IN CHINESE-THAI COMMUNITY RELATIONS COULD WELL BE AT AN END. IN ITS STEAD WILL BE AN ERA OF GREATER, MORE OVERT CHINESE ASSERTIVENESS OF THEIR ETHNIC IDENTITY. THESE NEW PRESSURES NOTWITHSTANDING, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE COMMUNAL GULF IN THAILAND WILL WIDEN TO THE POINT THAT IT HAS IN MALAYSIA. NONETHELESS THE POTENTIAL EXISTS FOR THE PRC, THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA, AND THE SOVIET UNION TO TRY TO EXPLOIT THE SHARPER ETHNIC IDENTITY OF THE CHINESE IN THAILAND FOR THEIR OWN POLITICAL ENDS.
KINTNER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISSIDENT FACTIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BANGKO02574
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750052-0927
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750248/aaaabqky.tel
Line Count: 133
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BANGKOK A-47
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 JUL 2003 by MartinML>; APPROVED <10 JUL 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHANGES IN THE CHINESE COMMUNITY SINCE OCTOBER 1973
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, TH, CH, TW
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006